DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 124 069 HE 007 932

AUTHOR Simerly, Robert G.
TITLE Faculty Development in Higher Education: From Myths to Research Findings.
PUB DATE Apr 75
NOTE 17p.; Paper presented at the annual forum of the Association for Institutional Research (April 1975)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Behavior Change; *Behavior Development; Changing Attitudes; *Development; Educational Change; Educational Development; *Faculty; Faculty Evaluation; *Higher Education; Interviews; Surveys; *Teaching; Teaching Methods; Teaching Techniques

ABSTRACT

In today's rapidly changing world faculty members and administrators in higher education must give conscious, deliberate attention to the concept of faculty development. Because there was no reliable data base about faculty development, a research project was undertaken to provide information about how faculty members perceive their own growth and development. A structured interview with 42 professors in each of the three ranks of full, associate, and assistant yielded the following results: (1) Faculty members are making only minor changes in their teaching and often these changes are hard to identify by professors. (2) Such changes are brought about primarily by the organization in which professors work rather than by outside sources. (3) Changes in teaching methods are not being evaluated in a scientific way. (4) The freedom provided by the university environment both helps and hinders faculty development. (5) Faculty members do not perceive that they are rewarded by the organization for teaching. (6) Traditional superior-subordinate yearly evaluation is the most frequently used evaluation for faculty performance. (7) Provisions for planned faculty development do not exist. (Author/JMF)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

ED124069

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION:
FROM MYTHS TO RESEARCH FINDINGS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

Robert G. Simerly, Assistant Director
Office of Extended Campus
103 Waverly Avenue
Syracuse University
Syracuse, New York 13210
(315) 423-4696

Paper presented at the annual forum of the Association for Institutional Research, April 1975.

HE007932

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION: FROM MYTHS TO RESEARCH FINDINGS

Robert G. Simerly, Syracuse University

I. The Complexities of Faculty Development

The fact that we lack an adequate knowledge base about how college teachers grow and develop professionally has been noted by Knapp (1965), Mayhew (1969), and Milton and Shoben (1968). We know little about why people are motivated to become college teachers. And once they have entered the academic ranks, we know little about how faculty members develop, why they choose to stay in higher education, or why they choose to leave. Surprisingly a comprehensive survey of nationwide faculty development programs has not been done. Recently, however, Gaff and Wilson (1971) reported that the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) asked subscribers to Academe, the AAUP newsletter, to indicate whether or not their institutions had faculty development programs. Only 6 of the 150 responses were affirmative.

The Need for Planned Faculty Development

In today's rapidly changing world faculty members and administrators in higher education must begin giving conscious, deliberate attention to the concept of faculty development. In a pre-cybernetic communications era faculty members did not need to give extensive planned consideration to their continued learning and development because new knowledge was introduced slowly into society. However, in today's cybernetic communications era change is rapid. The half life of knowledge in some disciplines is estimated to be between five and ten years. Therefore, as Gustad (1969)

points out, simply maintaining competency in one's own discipline is an overwhelming task for faculty members.

Today professors are caught in the difficult position of increasingly having to spend additional time at just maintaining their expertise while society demands that they also generate new knowledge as well as constantly improve their abilities at teaching and public service. When professors find it difficult or impossible to meet these demands, the charge often is that the quality of teaching is declining and that professors are not adequately continuing their professional development.

Teachers and Teaching - Some Basic Assumptions

The assumptions on which faculty members base their professional roles are central to the issue of faculty development. Logan Wilson (1972) charges that the faculty believe that it is their job to teach the students a particular discipline. Certainly the traditional organization of faculties into departments that tend to be concerned with a particular discipline has tended to encourage this viewpoint on the part of the faculty. Thus, often the large university has become overcompartmentalized which in turn encourages a rigidity that does not easily facilitate communication from one discipline to another. As a result, Litchfield (1959) and others have pointed out that an organic view or a view of the institution as a whole is often not encouraged.

In addition, the long history of faculty independence has tended to create a laissez-faire faculty system. The individual freedom of faculty members is jealously guarded and anything that approaches a tampering with this freedom is viewed as dysfunctional by large segments of the

academic community. This in turn has led to the ultimate in faculty independence that traditionally has been established in the tenure policy. Once faculty members attain tenure it is usually possible for them to perform their duties with little or no evaluation or input from the publics that they serve. This lack of concern for encouraging faculty members to be accountable to the publics that they serve in their professional roles has come to be known as academic freedom. John Honey (1972) has noted that we assume that this laissez-faire system works in the best interests of students. However, the student protests of recent years along with today's public demends for accountability and competency-based programs have seriously questioned this assumption.

Schein (1970) feels that it is the socialization process that has created the autonomous role traditionally ascribed to college teachers. The rigors of a doctoral program condition students to view graduate education as a series of hurdles to be jumped without question. Thus we produce experts whose behavior can only be questioned by someone who is more of an expert.

Closely related to this is the important assumption generally held about faculty members in higher education. We assume that the development of expertise in a subject area implies expertise in learning theory. However, there is a notable lack of exposure to learning theory in many of the educational programs designed to prepare individuals for teaching careers in higher education.

Also there are discrepancies between rewards and aspirations in the college teaching profession. Gustad (1959) notes that teaching is generally not rewarded by the higher education organization. While it

may be difficult to obtain conclusive proof regarding the rewarding of teaching, faculty perceptions of the problem have been obtained. For example, the Gaff and Wilson (1971) study showed that most individual faculty members responded that they valued good teaching. Yet these same respondents did not feel that good teaching led to advancement in their respective institutions. Chances for advancement were perceived by faculty members to be based almost solely on research resultant in publication. However, as Cartter (1966) has noted, the majority of faculty do not publish. Mayhew (1971) confirms the fact that the majority of faculty members do no research and publish no papers. In fact, he sees a definite value-conflict among publishing, teaching, and consulting that is significant in a faculty member's development.

The reward or lack of reward for teaching performance is complicated by the fact that we do not have an adequate means for judging teaching excellence (Cartter, 1966). Good teaching is usually discussed as a distinct act that is not necessarily related to learning. Thus the myth has evolved that good teachers have developed and refined certain teaching traits or skills. This implies that these traits or skills can be transferred from one teacher to another without directly relating them to the learning process. The major problem concerning the teaching-learning controversy is that we do not have an adequate knowledge base to show that what a teacher does in the classroom makes a significant difference in student learning as measured by the traditional ways we now measure learning. This points out the complexity of the cause-effect variables in the learning situation. Traditionally we have assumed that students have learned because they were "taught" by a teacher. Ohmer Milton (1972),

however, succinctly points out in Alternatives to the Traditional that the variables involved in the teaching-learning process are so complex that our present research methods have not been able to relate teaching behaviors to changes in student behaviors. Therefore it is impossible to talk about improving teaching until we can identify those behaviors that need to be improved in order to lead to learning outcomes in students.

Faculty Development - Defining the Problem

A major problem in discussing faculty development is a semantic issue. Agreement on what actually constitutes faculty development has not been reached. Is development concerned only with new techniques or methods? Does it include the way one is socialized into the profession? Is development the same thing as training?

For the purposes of this paper, faculty development can be thought of as giving conscious attention to planning, studying, and improving the processes used by faculties to attain goals they establish or that are established for them by the organization or by outside publics such as state legislatures. Thus faculty development is not necessarily a specific program or a set of programs. Rather it is a process that is in a constant state of change as it operates for the individual and for groups.

With this working definition of faculty development, this researcher designed a study that attempted to ascertain how faculty members develop in their professional roles.

II. A Research Base for Faculty Development

Procedures

A major first step in studying faculty development in higher education was to find out how faculty members perceive their own professional development. In order to do this the faculty at a large state university with a student enrollment of 23,000 and a faculty of 972 was chosen for study. Initially a questionnaire was created to obtain information about faculty perceptions of their own growth and development. The reliability of the questionnaire was tested during interviews of approximately one hour each with a selected sample of the population to be studied. This attempt at instrument validation revealed that answers to questions regarding faculty development were often so complex, individualized, and diverse that it was difficult to obtain reliable data through a questionnaire.

As a result it was decided to abandon the questionnaire approach. However, this testing of the questionnaire did reveal that faculty members could respond verbally in a reliable way to questions concerning how they perceive their own development. These responses were generally centered around a common core of concerns. Therefore it was decided to use this common core of concerns as a basis for asking questions during subsequent structured interviews.

The Sample

A five percent random sample of the 972 faculty members stratified by the three professional levels was chosen for the sample. This yielded a total sample of 45 with 15 professors in each of the three ranks of full, associate, and assistant professor. Three members of the sample elected not to participate in the study. Thus the N for the sample interviewed was 42.

The Research Design

Structured tape-recorded interviews of approximately one hour each were held with individual members of the sample. Direct quotes of the most pertinent information given in response to the questions were written down during listening sessions of the recorded interviews and two independent raters then read through the written data and the classifications of data. Adjustments were made as necessary in order for the researcher and the two raters to reach agreement about data classification.

Thus the study was exploratory in nature and it sought to ascertain faculty perceptions of their professional development process so that taxonomies of faculty development could be created. Specifically the study sought answers to the following questions:

1. What changes in teaching techniques are professors making?
2. What causes these changes?
3. How are changes in teaching evaluated?
4. What are the environmental factors that help and hinder professional growth and development?
5. What are the perceived organizational rewards for teaching?
6. How is faculty performance evaluated?
7. What provisions exist for planned faculty development?

III. Research Findings

Changes in Teaching

The changes that a faculty member makes in his/her teaching techniques are an integral part of faculty development. Therefore an attempt to ascertain changes in teaching techniques was made by asking the question, "Could you share with me a time within the last year or two or three when you made a change in your teaching style or teaching techniques that you felt resulted in your own professional growth and development as a faculty member?"

Early into the research it became clear that this question was based on a faulty assumption on the part of the researcher -- that faculty members were initiating readily identifiable changes in their teaching. Most respondents had a very difficult time answering this question. Changes in teaching, when mentioned, fell into two major categories: (1) changes in the process that occurred in the classroom; (2) changes in products used in teaching, such as audio-visual aids and bibliographies.

Half of the sample (49%) indicated that they had made changes in their teaching process. These process changes all could be categorized as group involvement approaches to teaching-learning that de-emphasized the lecture approach. However, when pressed about the specifics of these teaching process changes, most respondents were abstract about the change and could not cite specifically how the process in their classroom or their behavior as a teacher had changed.

Changes in products used in teaching were easier to identify than process changes; however, respondents still had trouble recalling such

changes. Such product changes included the following:

	Percentage of Sample Mentioning Change
1. Testing changes	19%
2. Use of audio-visual aids	16%
3. Type of assignments revised	14%
4. Course outlines changed	5%

Causes of Change in Teaching

The next step was to ask who was most responsible for these changes in teaching coming about. Organizational influences were listed by 40% of the sample as resulting in changes in teaching. Among the organizational influences were such things as interaction with colleagues, abolishing final examination week, and changes in the undergraduate curriculum.

Other reasons for change listed less frequently were:

	Percentage of Sample Mentioning Reason for Change
1. Students	19%
2. Self	16%
3. National trends	7%
4. Staff development activities	5%
5. Influences from previous schooling	5%

Evaluation of Change in Teaching

Change for change's sake occurs often in education. Therefore faculty members were asked how they had evaluated the success or failure of their stated changes in teaching. Subjective evaluation with no empirical data base was mentioned most often (70% of sample) as the method of evaluating change in teaching. Fully 19% of the sample stated that they had made no

evaluation of their change in teaching.

Working Environment and Faculty Development

The effect of the working environment is another important issue in faculty development. Environmental factors perceived by respondents as helping their growth and development were the opportunity to interact freely with colleagues. This was mentioned by 43% of the sample. In addition, the general freedom provided by the university atmosphere was listed by 40% of the respondents.

Negative factors that hindered faculty members' growth and development and mentioned by 39% of the sample centered primarily around the issue of not having enough time to excel in teaching, research, and public service.

Organizational Rewards for Teaching

This elicited rather clean-cut and often emotional responses. Most faculty members (77%) stated flatly that the organization did not reward performance in teaching. Associated with this was the fact that all of these respondents felt that the organization did reward research that resulted in publication.

Evaluation of Faculty Performance

The most common method of evaluation of a professor's performance was for the department head to fill out a rating form on the professor and then to discuss this with him/her. This was mentioned by 36% of the respondents. It is interesting to note that 21% of the sample stated that they received no formal evaluation. This is especially important in view of the fact that conversations with all deans within the university studied

indicated that all faculty members received at least a yearly evaluation.

Existence of Planned Faculty Development

Most departments did not give conscious attention to planned faculty development as reported by 74% of the sample. Another 14% of the sample was not sure whether their department had a planned faculty development program or not.

Summary of Findings

1. The idea of faculty members being experts in teaching-learning theory is a myth. Change for change's sake seems to be the norm for the sample studied. Changes in the teaching-learning situation are often abstract, vague, and not evaluated for their effectiveness.
2. Organizational influences at the employing university accounted for the majority of changes in teaching when they did occur.
3. The institutional working environment is seen as helpful for professional growth because of the freedom provided by the environment. However, this freedom also creates a dilemma of not providing enough time.
4. Most faculty members feel that the only way to advance in their profession is to do research that results in publication. Teaching performance is perceived to play little or no part in advancement.
5. The typical supervisor-subordinate evaluation in which the department head fills out a rating sheet on the faculty member and discusses it with him/her is the most commonly used yearly method of evaluation of faulty performance.
6. Planned efforts at faculty development are almost non-existent.

Conclusions

The idea of planned faculty development in which attention is focused on articulating and planning ways to integrate individual and organizational needs and goals is not a part of the conceptual scheme of the majority of most faculty members in the sample. Individuals actively against planned faculty development tended to see such planning as interfering with their autonomy. For these professors there was a distinct aversion to having the organization participate in a formal way in this area. Respondents in this category definitely did not see planned faculty development as a positive support system for faculty. Neither did they view it as a negotiating process between the individual faculty member and the organization. Typical of such expressed feelings was the following statement by one professor:

> The minute the university starts trying to plan things for me that's the day when they can get themselves another professor. I'm not having any organization or any member of an organization telling me what I can and cannot do in the classroom or anywhere else. It's none of their damn business. That's how the university historically has gained its strength -- by not allowing the organization to dictate to its faculty members.

It is interesting to note that the entire sample generally tended to view faculty development as a specific program that has a beginning and ending point. No respondent indicated that a planned faculty development program could be anything approaching a continuing, ongoing program in which the central issue would be to focus on the process of faculty development as opposed to specific content areas within the process.

IV. Implications for Institutional Center Research

Because of increasing public demands for accountability and competency based education, the planning for the utilization of human resources within institutions of higher education has assumed an importance equal to that of planning for physical and financial resources. Thus as institutional managers and researchers it is imperative that we conduct action-oriented research within our organizations regarding how we plan for and utilize the human resource of our faculty members.

We must create a data base about our faculty members -- a data base that contains reliable information about how they grow and develop personally and professionally, how satisfied they are with the quality of life in their organization, what they know about the teaching-learning process, and how they help or hinder the teaching-learning process.

Therefore in the decade of the seventies as we give more attention to accountability with responsibility the following will be our top priorities for faculty development:

1. Alternative ways are needed to provide the most effective means of providing positive psychological support systems for faculty members as they develop.
2. Organizational climates need to be created in which the individual and the organization can devise ways to articulate needs, plan goals, and establish processes to work toward goals.
3. Reward systems should be geared to the dynamics of effectively developing, establishing, and participating in such a process.

We can no longer ignore the fact that we must research ways to actively plan for the continuing development of our faculty if our institutions of

higher education are to remain viable in a rapidly changing world where the amount of knowledge is doubling every ten years. Viable educational institutions are changeable, renewable institutions. Changeable, renewable educational institutions must have changeable, renewable faculty members. We must now plan ways for this to occur rather than following our established pattern of leaving the development of our faculty members to chance.

Bibliography

Cartter, A. An assessment of quality in graduate education. Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, 1966.

Cartter, A. University teaching and excellence. In C. Lee (Ed.), Improving college teaching. Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, 1966.

Gaff, J. and Wilson, R. The teaching environment. American Association of University Professors Bulletin, Winter 1971, LVII, 475-493.

Gustad, J. Man in the middle: conditions of work of college and university faculty members. In S. Elam and M. Moskow (Eds.), Employment relations in higher education. Bloomington, Indiana: Phi Delta Kappa, 1969.

Gustad, J. They march to a different drummer: another look at college teachers. Educational Record, July 1959, XL, 204-211.

Honey, J. Will the faculty survive? Change, June 1972, 24-28.

Knapp, R. Changing functions of the college professor. In N. Sanford (Ed.), The american college: a psychological and sociological interpretation of the higher learning. New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1965.

Litchfield, E. Organization in large american universities: the faculty. Journal of Higher Education, October 1959, XX, 353-364.

Mayhew, L. Comment by Lewis B. Mayhew. Journal of Higher Education, June 1971, XLII, 495-498.

Mayhew, L. Faculty demands and faculty militance. Journal of Higher Education, May 1969, XL, 337-350.

Milton, O. Alternatives to the traditional. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1972.

Milton, O. and Shoben, E. (Eds.) Learning and the professors. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1968.

Schein, E. The reluctant professor: implications for university management. Sloan Management Review, Fall 1970, XI-XII, 35-49.

Wilson, L. Shaping american higher education. Washington, D.C.: American Council on Higher Education, 1972.